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Deities and Mythology

The Trumaí were certainly not preoccupied with the supernatural. Quain makes no mention of the spirit owners of animal, plant, and fish species that figure so prominently in the Kamayurá belief system, nor does he speak of the "*ole* spirits" attributed to the Trumaí by Oberg.[8] Beliefs, which are a more covert part of culture, are particularly difficult for an ethnographer who lacks familiarity with the language to learn about, and it is understandable that Quain's notes are weak on this point.

Magic, except for sorcery, was not observed by Quain, unless shamanistic curing is considered a magical practice. No objects, such as charms or amulets, were thought to have a magical effect, and the already discarded ceremonial objects were the only inanimate items that could be said to have some inherent religious value. In short, the day-to-day world of the Trumaí was little influenced by extra-corporeal forces or personages. The deities were nearly all culture heroes and creators, who did their work in the dim past of the "grandfathers of all the Trumaí."

With some variation the mythology of the Trumaí was quite similar to that of the Kamayurá. The most important of the Trumaí creation deities was Sun (Atehle). This was not the visible, celestial sun. The Trumaí explained that the celestial sun was only the *aton* (pet) of the real Sun, who was important in all the creation myths. Sun no longer actively intervened in life, but in the days of the creation he was an anthropomorphic personage having great supernatural powers. Sun's mother was the wife of Panther (Fetde), who appears in the tales of the after life. This woman, in turn, was the daughter of Wamutsini, or Grandfather. The latter had an important part in the creation, for he was the original deity from whom the other supernaturals sprang. Wamutsini's daughter was not important in these stories.

The identity and character of Moon were ill-defined. At one time Moon was in the heavens with Sun, who, however, became angry with him and cast him out to his present isolated position. Moon was once eaten by Awalanaxe, a fish. Sun, upon learning of this, made a fishhook, caught Awalanaxe, and disembowelled him. Moon was found inside quite chewed up, but Sun molded him back into shape. A fly then crawled up the nostril of the unconscious Moon causing him to sneeze. He thought that he had merely been asleep, but Sun explained that he had been eaten.

Moon's sex was highly ambivalent, being a male in some tales and a female in others. He was not, however, important as a creator. Awalanaxe appeared frequently in the mythology as did Wakpanehene, another fish.

[8] Oberg 1953, p. 54.

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It was Quain's good fortune that a lunar eclipse occurred while he was still in the company of the Trumaí who were escorting him back to civilization. On about November 7, 1938, the moon eclipsed shortly after it rose. When it was first noticed, one man asked Quain to fire his gun. Another danced and shot a burning arrow at the moon. 921 789

The eclipse lasted for more than an hour, and during this time the Indians refused to proceed further. It was necessary to frighten away whatever was eating the moon. To right the disturbance of the natural harmony, Maibu drew himself up to his full stature and addressed the moon at great length. All the tribes in the area, Quain was told, were taking similar measures.

The eclipse was thought to be a harbinger of evil. One man decided to return home in the belief that now the white men would kill him. Yati, who had an infected hand, was sad because Matiwana, his father, would think by this sign that he, Yati, had been "killed" by Mehinaku witchcraft. As Yati's hand grew worse, the rest of the party began to believe that the eclipse was caused by old Matiwana's tears. [787]

Seasons were recognized as "sunny times" and "rainy times," and the number of moons and their phases were used as time-markers. Long periods were reckoned as "when my father was small" or "when I was a boy;" short periods by adding up the passing nights. This latter method was ineffectual for anything after ten days, as ten marked the upper limit of Trumaí counting. 805 [802]

Enumeration of objects was shown by holding up the appropriate combination of fingers. There were words for the numbers one through ten, but ten also signified "a great many." Large quantities could be expressed by gesture as well. When Maibu wanted to indicate many *beiýá*, he held up his hand to their height when stacked. 802